

## VOTE - Voter Outreach Through Education Washington Secretary of State

### WASHINGTON STATE CURRICULUM GRADES 8-12 STUDENT HANDOUT, LESSON 9

#### THEME: VOTER REGISTRATION - I CAN REGISTER STUDENTS TOO!

*"Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do."*  
(John Wooden)

America needs your participation, energy, vision and tenacity! The issues that will affect young citizens in the present and near future are numerous and compelling. Discussing them with adults you respect is a great way to clarify your own views, before you sign a petition, vote on an issue, or elect an official. You are helping others in your community, state and nation when you participate in a dialogue about issues that concern and affect you. Civic dialogue is the fertile soil that nurtures the seeds of democracy, such as volunteering, campaigning, voting and running for office.

This lesson will provide you with evidence of how political decisions affect you, as well as the need for, and benefits of, your involvement in the political process. It will involve you in a dialogue with adults close to you. It will also ask you to become an activist by acting as a catalyst for a voter registration drive. This lesson is in two parts.

#### ACTIVITY: ONE

Read this list of recent or potential ballot issues. These issues are decided directly or indirectly through the ballot box and you can have a part in shaping their outcome.

- Affordable health insurance, especially for single people
- Auto insurance rates, especially for those younger than 25
- Discrimination in housing and employment policies
- College tuition rates
- Sales and gas tax rates
- Laws affecting workplace safety, overtime pay and mandatory overtime policies
- Public funding (bonds) to pay for new sports stadiums
- The use of lottery proceeds, existing property taxes, and budget reserves to reduce public school class sizes
- Mandatory seatbelt and helmet laws
- Raising taxes cigarettes and other tobacco products for expanded health care services for low-income persons
- Election of those who govern our local schools
- Levies (taxes) to pay for our local schools
- Taxes to support the 911 emergency system or the Medic One ambulance system
- Laws relating to personal freedoms and privacy; e.g., Internet regulations and access, personal identity sharing and access to music and movies
- Regulations on auto emissions (mandatory testing), personal watercraft (jet skis) and noise levels of car and home stereo systems
- Mandatory recycling laws and the level of fines for littering

Almost 50% of young people (18-24) surveyed in a national, non-partisan study said that they never or rarely discuss politics, government or current events with their parents or guardians.

Show the issues list above (provided by your teacher on a separate sheet) to your parent(s) or guardian(s). Ask them to read the list and then together choose two issues from the list that both you and they consider important. Share what either of you knows about the issue already, concerns you have about it, and what you think should be done about the issue legally. As you consider existing laws or potential solutions, you might want to include these questions: "What are (would be) the positive aspects of such a law?" and "What are (would be) the negative aspects of such a law?"

After your discussion, write a summary paper on the two issues that include an explanation of:

- a. What agreements you reached;
- b. What points you disagreed on;
- c. What questions arose for which you need answers;
- d. Your position on each issue now and whether it changed at all as a result of the discussion; and
- e. A brief reflection on the discussion process itself and whether you are likely to do it again in the future.

Turn your paper in to the teacher and be prepared to share your experiences and views on the issues discussed.

#### ACTIVITY: TWO

This activity is designed to make you part of the solution to the problem of citizens not registering to vote. You will become the change agents by designing and implementing a campaign to register new voters.

Remember! Only registered voters can sign petitions for Initiatives, Referendums, and recalls of elected officials. Only registered voters can decide with their vote who will make decisions that affect them and their future.

Your teacher will form you into "Campaign Teams." Once formed into these teams, you are to design an outreach campaign to promote voter registration. You will have several options for your strategy. Choose one of the following methods, a combination, or design an alternative. You may wish to have the above "Issues List" handy to discuss with potential registered voters. You may want to contact your County Elections office to request some Mail-in Voter Registration Forms.

1. Implement an educational campaign using posters and leaflets you create. Place them around school and in predominantly Senior classes. Staff an information-voter registration table before school, during activity periods, lunches and at sporting events. Have copies of the "Mail-In Voter Registration Form" and guidelines to distribute to students. Present those who register with a token of appreciation.
2. Contact the school office and seek permission to identify students who are 17 and one-half years old or older. Divide the list up among your team members and personally contact each individual with a voter registration form. Present those who register with a token of appreciation.
3. Design a PowerPoint or video presentation using the information from this lesson (and other lessons if desired) plus graphics to impress on students the benefits of voting and the ease with which voter registration can be done. Ask teachers of Senior students for permission to make your presentation to their classes. Be sure to bring copies of the "Mail-In Voter Registration Form" to the presentations.
4. Produce a video presentation (or help produce one) to be aired on your school's video news network or your community's local access cable channel. Use the information from this lesson (and other lessons if desired) plus graphics to impress on viewers the benefits of voting and the ease with which voter registration can be done. Go to [www.vote.wa.gov](http://www.vote.wa.gov) for contact information to share about the voter registration process.
5. Sponsor a school assembly and/or perform a skit for Junior and Senior classes emphasizing that eligible students can KEY INTO FREEDOM by registering to vote.
6. Craft a letter-writing campaign to students that recently graduated from your school. Seek addresses from the school office, the alumni files and family and friends of the graduates. Generate a letter that uses the information from other lessons and/or points that emphasize the "power of one" vote. Include in the mailing a copy of the two-page "Mail-In Voter Registration Form" or get copies of the form from your County Elections office. If a past student from the school registers, mail them a congratulatory note.
7. Create an email campaign reaching out to students that recently graduated from your school. Seek email addresses from the school office, the alumni files and family and friends of the graduates. Generate an email letter that uses information from other lessons and/or points that emphasize the "power of one" vote. Direct them to [www.vote.wa.gov](http://www.vote.wa.gov) where they can either download a voter registration form or request by email that one be sent to them. If they register, send them a congratulatory Internet greeting card.

Whatever method you choose, here is a special reminder you might be interested in sharing. It used to be that registering to vote was your ticket into the pool of potential jurors. This kept some eligible voters from registering so they would avoid jury duty. This is no longer the case and not a viable reason not to register to vote. The Legislature changed the law several years ago. Now, not only is the jury pool drawn from the voter registration database, but also from driver license and ID card applications with the State Department of Licensing. In other words, if you have a state drivers' license, your name is already in the jury pool.

Each student or team should prepare a written report that includes:

- a. The plan you chose;
- b. The steps you took to implement it;
- c. How well the team worked together;
- d. How you felt about the process and results;
- e. The perceived impact of your project; and
- f. What lessons you learned in doing it.